



Chapter 1 notes

Autism (Athabasca University)



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Chapter 1

Sunday, October 4, 2020

9:15 PM

1. Describe the characteristics of Autism Spectrum Disorders.
2. Explain how Autism Spectrum Disorders are identified and diagnosed.
3. Identify the changes in the definition of Autism Spectrum Disorders.
4. Discuss causal theories associated with autism.
5. Describe instructional planning for students with autism.

1- Describe the characteristics of Autism Spectrum Disorders:

- Nonverbal or language difficulties (language consists primarily of echolalia-immediate repetitions of what they hear- or delayed echolalia-repetitions of what they have heard from others prior to three conversational turns- very commonly from television)
- Not interested in other children, and those who are may not express this desire in a typical way
- Behaviours like rocking back and forth, flapping their hands, and show special interests in unusual objects or topics-these behaviours may not manifest until the child is 3 years old
- Below-average intelligence-75% of children with autism have a cognitive disability, higher than 70 IQ score are referred to high functioning autism while lower scores are referred to a low-functioning autism
- More males than females- 5 boys are diagnosed for every girl diagnosed
- Flat affect or a limited/depressed range of facial expressions and at other times they may display an overly exaggerated affect
- Many children with ASD are very attached to their parents
- Repetitive patterns of behaviour, interests or activities: adherence to routines or resistance to change, restricted interests and hyper-reactivity to sensory stimuli

2- Explain how Autism Spectrum Disorders are identified and diagnosed:

- The Autism Diagnostic Interview-Revised(ADI-R):
 - Comprehensive interview conducted with the parent or caregiver
 - Assess the extent of autistic symptoms in individuals with a mental age of 2 and older
 - 85-page interview booklet with 93 items takes 1.5-2.5 hours to administer and score
 - Questions are in the following sections: background information, introductory questions, early development, loss of language or other skills, language and communicative functioning, social development and play, favourite activities and toys, interests and behaviours, and general behaviours.
 - Never to be used as the sole diagnostic tool, used for research and is an important clinical tool

- The Autism Diagnostic Observation Schedule-Generic(ADOS-G):
 - Assess the three areas of impairment associated with autism
 - Takes approximately 30-45 minutes to administer
 - 4 modules, based on the cognitive and language levels of the individual being assessed
 - Module 1: young children or children with no language, Module 4: Adults who speak in full sentences
 - Modules 1 and 2 are largely play based and assess constructs such as joint attention (sharing one's experience of observing an object or event, by following gaze, or pointing gestures), reciprocal play, social interest, and eye contact
 - Modules 3 and 4 assess imaginary play, but are largely interview based, particularly module 4
 - Interview questions focus on social stressors, descriptors of emotions, adaptive behaviour, and daily life events
 - Both modules provide an opportunity for the assessment of language and conversational skills, appropriate eye contact, and imagination
- The Social Communication Questionnaire(SCQ):
 - 40 item questionnaire that contains the algorithm items from the ADI-R in a yes/no format
 - Designed to screen for ASD
 - 2 Forms: Lifetime and current versions
 - Current version: Investigates the child's behaviour over the past 3 months
 - Lifetime version: Assesses ASD symptoms across the lifetime of an individual, with a particular focus on the time when a child was between 4 and 5 years old
- The Social Responsiveness Scale-Second Edition:
 - 65 item rating scale that measures the severity of autism spectrum symptoms, including social impairments, social awareness, social information processing, capacity for reciprocal social communication, social anxiety/avoidance, and autistic preoccupations and traits as they occur in natural social settings
 - Completed by a parent or teacher in 15-20 minutes
- Several screening instruments available:
 - Modified-Checklist for Autism in Toddlers(M-CHAT)
 - Asperger Syndrome Diagnostic Scale
 - Childhood Autism Rating Scale

3- Identify the changes in the definition of Autism Spectrum Disorders:

- Until recently, there were five Pervasive Developmental Disorders listed in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders.
- Rather than three disorders, one label of Autism Spectrum Disorder will categorize all these children according to the DSM

4- Discuss causal theories associated with autism:

- Not caused by the parents, as beliefs used to be
- Exact cause of ASD is unknown, however genetics is the leading suspected cause
- Some believe that environmental plays a role as well as genetics
- Environment:
 - Environmental contributors have been theorized to include pre-,peri-,and post-natal factors (such as second and third trimester uterine bleeding, Rh incompatibility, high bilirubin levels at birth, and oxygen supplementation at birth)
 - Other environmental culprits: vitamin deficiency, allergies, and toxins have been suggested but there is no research to back up these claims
- Genetics:
 - No single gene has been identified as a cause in every case, approximately 5% of individuals with autism have an identified chromosomal abnormality
 - Research indicates that siblings of a child with autism also have a risk of related difficulties

5- Discuss instructional planning for students with autism:

Development of the Individualized Education Program (6 parts)

- Describing of the child's present level of performance or functioning:
 - The first step in developing an IEP involves a description of the child as he is at the present time
 - Highlighting the child's current academic and behavioural skills, interests, and learning style, and discussing the implications of the child's disability on academic and non-academic achievement
 - IEP team develops a list of areas of instructional priority, often referred to as priority educational needs (PENS)
- Annual goals and objectives:
 - Goals and objectives are descriptions of the skills that the child will attain within a specified period of time
 - Goals are typically written to reflect annual expectations for progress, whereas objectives typically reflect short-term steps (often quarterly) toward the attainment of the annual goal
- Related services:
 - Related services are those services that are necessary in order to effectively implement the IEP and designed to ensure that the child is able to benefit from special education in the least restrictive environment
 - Examples: counseling; occupational, physical, and/or speech and language therapies; parent training; and assistive technology
- Educational placement:
 - The educational setting in which the IEP will be implemented and is chosen based on the setting in which the goals and objectives will be appropriately met
 - If the classroom setting isn't a general educational classroom, the IEP must specify the amount of time (if any) that the child will participate in the general education classroom and include a statement ensuring that the least restrictive environment was considered

- Time and duration of services:
 - Specifies starting and ending dates for goals, objectives, and related services
 - For example: IEP might specify that speech and language therapy will be delivered twice a week for 30 minutes each session for the duration for the IEP
 - Special education law (IDEA) requires annual review of services provided in the IEP, long-term duration for services should be projected no further than 1 year
- Evaluation of the IEP:
 - Specifying how student progress toward short-term objectives and annual goals will be measured or evaluated
 - Following a process-oriented assessment approach will ensure that this step is not overlooked
 - Well-written goals and objectives automatically build an evaluation process by allowing for growth and development to be tracked